

# WASTE BYTES!

*Newsletter of the Maine State Planning Office, Waste Management and Recycling Program*

## Campaign Special Edition! Recycles Meets Reuse

### ***Reusable Shopping Bag Campaign***

Monday, November 9, 2009, was the kickoff of Maine Recycles Week 2009 with a press conference in the State House, Hall of Flags. During the spring of 2009, the 124<sup>th</sup> Legislature had passed Resolve 64, "Encouraging the Availability and Use of Reusable Shopping Bags". Resolve 64 added the creation of a work group of stake holders to plan and implement the project. The Reusable Shopping Bag Work Group was ready to release their work by MRW 2009.

This work group, for the promotion of reusable shopping bags, met twice a month through the summer, working on an MOU to encourage increased use of reusable shopping bags. The group also adopted many aspects of a similar campaign in California..

As ten o'clock neared, it did not appear that there would be many there. By 9:50, the members of the work group arrived and spun an atmosphere to capture the press. Two television stations and several members of the press corps circled the chairs. There were a few interested persons in the seats and task force members took their places in front of the curtain erected at the foot of the stair case with a few displays. Speakers were: Martha Freeman, SPO Director; Shelley Doak, Maine Grocers Association; Curtis Picard, Maine Merchants Association, and Matt Prindiville, Maine Natural Resources Council.

### ***Maine Recycles Week 2009***

As with any event, there is a great deal of work in preparation. There is the recruitment of volunteers, brainstorming, planning, organizing, assigning of duties, getting the word out, and finally bringing it all together at just the right time. At the local level and the state level there is a big difference though.

The Maine Recycles Week Steering Committee was more than lucky to inherit a campaign that had rebounded from an original arrangement with America Recycles Day into the talented hands of Shannon Haynes at the State Planning Office. The timeline focusing in on Maine Recycles Week every November is relatively easy with distinct landmarks matched to goals with a path designed with ample room for creativity and flexibility. At the local level, it has always seemed as though there were many variables.

Maine Recycles Week 2009 is the eleventh year to be presented. With a routine set to go, MRW 2009 was greeted with a rough economy, schools in the midst of confusion from reorganization and budget cuts. Consulting the last Maine Recycles Calendar it was finally noticed that November 2009 did indeed contain a Friday the Thirteenth.



## Maine Recycles Campaign

Three and a half years ago, the State Planning Office Waste Management and Recycling Team looked at the latest statistics related to recycling and saw another dot on the statistical plateau of annual recycling rate data. As with other states, we knew that almost all Mainers could recycle and we had evidence that less than half did. At the time, it was being said that what was left was to sell recycling the remainder of the population.

When it came to selling, we were also at a time when Community Based Social Marketing was being presented as the next strategy. In the first strategies a decade ago, the importance of getting the word out was recognized. Now it was being suggested that the audience should be scientifically identified and a campaign be put in place to reach our subjects. SPO would address the entire state, and urge communities to build a campaign at the local level. That was then.



The Maine Recycles Ad Campaign Committee was formed for a collaborative effort between municipalities and the State of Maine. A professional campaign was organized. A few lines changed and at least the effort was being made in parts of the state to hook the recycling rate to media. Maine Recycles became the slogan; however the logo never did quite make the impression to be called branding. The slogan has evolved from “Everything deserves a second chance” to “Recycling Works for Maine”. Everything comes in threes: three chasing arrows; now there are three campaigns before us to take advantage of to reduce our waste streams.



## Maine Recycles Steering Committee

Since the Maine Recycles Campaign was aimed at municipalities, the steering committee that was convened to offer assistance, support, and leadership was rather large. At the beginning, the committee consisted of the Waste Management and Recycling Team members from the SPO, a private advertising firm, and representatives from Aroostook, Portland, Bangor, and the Maine Resource Recovery Association. The early meetings were facilitated by Jody Harris of the SPO Director’s Team.

## Maine Recycles Week Steering Committee

Maine Recycles Week is in its eleventh year; however the steering committee has kept its original flavor of its public private partnership over the years. The committee has always been staffed by a member of the State Planning Office Waste Management and Recycling Team. An original attempt to partner with America Recycles Day failed when it was realized how the project would be offered, under the demands of a national office. This was quickly corrected with the oversight of representatives of the perceived possible audience. The private sector reps were and are the major waste companies: Waste Management, Casella Waste Systems, CPRC Group. The public sector is represented by: the Auburn Share Center, the Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments, and the SPO. The Maine Resource Recovery Association adds the perfect balance representing municipalities and Industry.



### The Reusable Bag Work Group:

The working group for providing for the accessibility of reusable bags came from those working with the legislation. The stake holders identified in the process of working with the resolve formed their own partnership. With the support of some of the original legislators, such as Representative Knapp of Gorham, the group consisted of:

Shelley Doak, Maine Grocers Association  
 Curtis Picard, Maine Merchants Association  
 Chris Jackson, Maine Chamber of Commerce  
 Ben Gilman, Maine Oil Dealers Association  
 The New England Convenience Store Association  
 Matt Prindiville, Natural Resources Council of Maine  
 Alex Serra, Wal\*mart  
 Steve Culver, Hannaford Brothers  
 Deb Hart, Hart Public Policy/Hannaford  
 Doug Carr, Perkins/Thompson for Rite Aid  
 Steve Rosario, American Chemistry Council  
 Leann Diehl, Public Affairs Group/American Chemistry Council  
 Michael Parker, Department of Environmental Protection  
 George MacDonald, State Planning Office

Actually the first issue of plastic bags came to light at a Maine Resource Recovery Association meeting in Auburn a few years ago. Following a program of going into schools and classrooms, a session with David Zimmerman of the Materials Building Exchange, a tour of the Sabattus transfer station, and a wonderful lunch at the Falls Restaurant, the assembled guests were offered an opportunity to voice their opinions, bring up problems, and ask for solutions. On the list of troublesome materials or conditions were among other things: wine boxes or their sacks as well as plastic bags blowing in the wind at the transfer stations.

Each person there seemed to identify with what are called by some as “first use bags”. Most then referred to them as floating into the landscape, plastered against the snow fences, or a day-long task for volunteers and prison details.

*Your Assignment, Mr. or Mrs. Gray, should you choose to accept it, is to join the reusable campaign and not forget to promote reuse when we bend an ear about recycling.*

The campaign’s logo is:



Looking back at when Maine Recycles was kicked off, surveys identified that most information is supplied by the attendants at the transfer station or at the municipal offices. It is doubtful if that has changed. What has changed is that now there are three campaigns to help the effort. (We may have to develop a campaign for “Reduce” next to complete the circle!)

This Maine Recycles Week those in the waste reduction business were joined by retailers across the state. Let us join with them, with a new commitment and new energy to reach our 50% statewide recycling rate as we help the reusable work group reach their goal of a 33% reduction in disposable checkout bag use by 2013. This campaign offers ample opportunities to increase recycling and reduce waste. When asked for Holiday suggestions to recycle, we normally answer with something like reuse wrapping paper. Maybe it is time to give presents in reusable bags?

Support your local retailer and remember that you are supporting the effort and thanking our stores for the help in reducing waste.



**Got Your  
BAGS?**

[gotyourbagsmaine.org](http://gotyourbagsmaine.org)